

Documents on Diplomacy: Resources

Nixon in China: Document B

125. Message From the Government of the United States to the Government of the People's Republic of China ¹

Washington, May 10, 1971.

President Nixon has carefully studied the message of April 21, 1971, from Premier Chou En-lai conveyed through the courtesy of President Yahya Khan. President Nixon agrees that direct high-level negotiations are necessary to resolve the issues dividing the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. Because of the importance he attaches to normalizing relations between our two countries, President Nixon is prepared to accept the suggestion of Premier Chou En-lai that he visit Peking for direct conversations with the leaders of the People's Republic of China. At such a meeting each side would be free to raise the issue of principal concern to it.

In order to prepare the visit by President Nixon and to establish reliable contact with the leaders of the Chinese

People's Republic, President Nixon proposes a preliminary secret meeting between his Assistant for National Security Affairs, Dr. Kissinger, and Premier Chou En-lai or another appropriate high-level Chinese official. Dr. Kissinger would be prepared to attend such a meeting on Chinese soil preferably at some location within convenient flying distance from Pakistan to be suggested by the People's Republic of China. Dr. Kissinger would be authorized to discuss the circumstances which would make a visit by President Nixon most useful, the agenda of such a meeting, the time of such a visit and to begin a preliminary exchange of views on all subjects of mutual interest. If it should be thought desirable that a special emissary come to Peking publicly between the secret visit to the People's Republic of China of Dr. Kissinger and the arrival of President Nixon, Dr. Kissinger will be authorized to arrange it. It is anticipated that the visit of President Nixon to Peking could be announced within a short time of the

secret meeting between Dr. Kissinger and Premier Chou En-lai. Dr. Kissinger will be prepared to come from June 15 onward. It is proposed that the precise details of Dr. Kissinger's trip including location, duration of stay, communication and similar matters be discussed through the good offices of President Yahya Khan. For secrecy, it is essential that no other channel be used. It is also understood that this first meeting between Dr. Kissinger and high officials of the People's Republic of China be strictly secret.²

¹ *Source:* National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 1031, Files for the President—China Material, Exchanges Leading up to HAK's Trip to China, December 1969–July 1971. No classification marking. A handwritten note at the top of the first page reads: "Handed by Mr. Kissinger to Amb. Hilaly, 12:00, 5/10/71." Kissinger met with Hilaly on May 10 from 12:10 to 12:55 p.m. and from 3:05 to 3:29 p.m. (Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Kissinger Papers, Box 438, Miscellany, 1968–1976, Record of Schedule) Kissinger informed Farland via a May 14 backchannel message that "Message passed to Yahya through Hilaly along lines of our conversation. You were designated as point of contact for travel arrangements." (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, NSC Files, Box 426, Backchannel Files, Backchannel Messages—1971—Amb Farland—Pakistan) Farland informed Kissinger on May 22 that this message was received by Yahya in Lahore on May 17 and was given to the PRC Ambassador on May 19. (Ibid.)

² Nixon did, however, hint to Rogers that a meeting was possible. At a May 21 meeting with Rogers, Nixon remarked: "Now, it's something that we should keep very much, now one thing I've done that you should know, Maurice Stans wants to take a commercial mission, Ted Kennedy suggested he could drop over from there [the PRC] on his trips and so forth. And I said none of you even approach it, don't even suggest it, we're not going to get into [unintelligible]. Any visits must be at the highest level. It would have to be you or me or both. And it might come, it might come. I just have a hunch here, a feeling that there's something going on there. I think that this Russian thing has a helluva lot more to do with China than anything else. They're scared of them." Rogers replied: "Yeah, no doubt about it. I think we want to be careful, that's why I want to mention today in my speech, on not appearing that we've turned them off. I think we've got to soften, to downplay a little bit so we don't get too eager." (Ibid., White House Tapes, Recording of conversation between Nixon and Rogers, May 21, 1971, 11:29–11:41 a.m., Oval Office, Conversation No. 503–9) Rogers' May 21 speech before the 1970 Medal of Honor recipients is in the Department of State Bulletin, June 14, 1971, pp. 766–768. 126.